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AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1 (Currently Amended): A cutting head assembly for a food slicing machine

comprising;

a generally circular cutting head for slicing a food product and carrying a

plurality of circumferentially spaced cutting blades mounted thereon;

a rotary impeller arranged within the cutting head and to be driven in an

intended driving direction of rotation about an axis of rotation located concentrically

within the cutting head, the impeller having a plurality of impeller blades arranged for

rotation in close approximation to the cutting blades of the cutting head;

a support ring comprising a ring portion having upper and lower surfaces and

a plurality of circumferentially spaced flange segments projecting radially from the

ring portion, each of said flange segments having a top surface, and including a

radially and axially extending first flange surface oriented to extend at an angle

relative to the axis of the support ring in an inclined direction from a forward radial

edge adjacent the lower surface of the support ring directed upwardly to a rearward

radial edge adjacent the upper surface of the support ring on an end of the flange

segment generally opposed to a driving direction of rotation of an impeller within the

cutting head, the flange segments also defining a second flange surface located at an

end opposite the first flange surface and extending generally parallel to the support

ring axis; and

an annular mounting ring located coaxially for connection to a bottom portion

of the cutting head, the mounting ring having upper and lower surfaces and a plurality

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of circumferentially spaced protrusions extending axially therefrom, each of said

protrusions provided with a first protrusion surface oriented to extend at an angle

relative to the axis of the mounting ring within an inclined direction relative to a

forward radial edge directed upwardly to a rearward radial edge adjacent the lower

surface of the mounting ring on an end of the protrusion generally leading in a driven

direction of rotation of [[an]] the impeller within the cutting head, the protrusions also

defining a second protrusion surface located at an end opposite the first protrusion

surface and extending generally parallel with the mounting ring axis;

wherein said protrusion surfaces of the mounting ring are complimentary

complementary shaped to the flange surfaces of the support ring, said mounting ring

positionable on the support ring so that the lower surface of the mounting ring is

directly adjacent and flush with the top surfaces of the flange segments and the first

protrusion surfaces are mutually engageable face-to-face with the first flange surfaces

such that the cutting head is rotationally locked with the support ring thereby

permitting the impeller to be rotatable relative to the cutting head which remains

generally stationary relative to the impeller.

2 (Previously Presented): The cutting head assembly according to claim 1,

wherein the protrusion surfaces are configured diagonally opposite the flange surfaces

when the lower surface of the mounting ring is disposed on the upper surface of the

support ring and concentric therewith with the protrusions and flange segments

interdigited.

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3 (Previously Presented): The ring assembly according to claim 1, wherein

the support ring further includes an annular lip axially extending from the upper

surface thereof having an inner circumference generally concentric with an inner

peripheral circumference of the support ring and an outer circumference between the

inner and outer peripheral circumferences of the support ring, an annular receiving

area on the upper surface of the support ring radially extending from the outer

circumference of the annular lip to the outer peripheral circumference of the support

ring.

4 (Previously Presented): The ring assembly according to claim 3, wherein

the mounting ring has an inner peripheral circumference sized to be received by the

annular lip of the support ring and received by the annular receiving area of the

support ring, the inner peripheral circumference of the mounting ring having a

diameter substantially the same as the outer circumferential diameter of the annular

lip.

5 (Previously Presented): The ring assembly according to claim 4, wherein

the mounting ring has an outer circumference with a diameter substantially the same

as the outer circumference of the support ring.

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6 (Currently Amended): A ring assembly having an interlocking joint

arrangement, comprising:

a support ring comprising a ring portion having upper and lower radial

surfaces with a plurality of circumferentially spaced flange segments projecting

radially therefrom, each of said flange segments having a top surface, and including

an inclined surface oriented to extend at an angle inclined relative to the axis of the

support ring; and

a mounting ring having upper and lower radial surfaces and a plurality of

circumferentially spaced protrusions extending axially from the lower surface, each of

said protrusions provided with an inclined surface oriented to extend at an angle

inclined relative to the axis of the mounting ring, said inclined surfaces of the

protrusions complimentary complementary shaped to said inclined surfaces of the

flange segments;

wherein the lower surface of the mounting ring is configured so as to be

received by the upper surface of the support ring in a coaxial relationship with the

support ring such that the lower radial surface of the mounting ring is directly

adjacent and flush with the top surfaces of the flange segments and the flange

segments are interlocked with the protrusions upon rotation of the mounting ring

relative to the support ring in only one direction and the inclined surfaces of the

protrusions mutually engage face-to-face with the inclined surfaces of the flange

segments;

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wherein the flange segments each define a lower radial surface generally

parallel to the lower surface of the ring portion of the support ring, and the protrusions

define a lower radial surface such that the flange segment lower radial surfaces are

generally aligned with the protrusion lower radial surfaces when the mounting ring is

engaged with the support ring.

7 (Original): The ring assembly according to claim 6, wherein the inclined

surfaces of the protrusions are configured diagonally opposite the inclined surfaces of

the flange segments when the lower surface of the mounting ring is received on the

upper surface of the support ring and coaxial therewith.

8 (Original): The ring assembly according to claim 6, wherein the inclined

surfaces of the flange segments have a rearward edge generally adjacent to the upper

surface of the support ring and an opposite forward edge generally adjacent the lower

surface of the support ring and in a circumferentially spaced relationship relative to

the rearward edge, the inclined surfaces of the protrusions having a rearward edge

generally adjacent the lower surface of the mounting ring and defining a corner

therewith and an opposite forward edge in a circumferentially spaced relationship

relative to the rearward edge.

9 (Previously Presented): The ring assembly according to claim 6, wherein

the support ring further includes an annular lip axially extending from the upper

surface thereof having an inner circumference generally concentric with an inner

peripheral circumference of the support ring and an outer circumference between the

inner and outer peripheral circumferences of the support ring, an annular receiving

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area on the upper surface of the support ring radially extending from the outer

circumference of the annular lip to the outer peripheral circumference of the support

ring.

10 (Previously Presented): The ring assembly according to claim 9, wherein

the mounting ring has an inner peripheral circumference sized to be received by the

annular lip of the support ring and received by the annular receiving area of the

support ring, the inner circumference of the mounting ring having a diameter

substantially the same as the outer circumference of the annular lip.

11 (Previously Presented): The ring assembly according to claim 10, wherein

the mounting ring has an outer circumference with a diameter substantially the same

as the outer peripheral circumference of the support ring.

12 (Canceled).

13 (Previously Presented): An interlocking joint arrangement for mounting a

generally circular cutting head for slicing a food product on a slicing machine, the

slicing machine including a rotary impeller arranged to be driven in an intended

driving direction of rotation about an axis of rotation located concentrically within the

cutting head when the cutting head is mounted on the slicing machine, the slicing

machine including a support ring fixedly mounted thereto and the cutting head

including an annular mounting ring coaxially connected to a bottom portion thereof,

the joint arrangement comprising:

the support ring having a plurality of circumferentially spaced flange segments

radially extending therefrom each having a top surface, and a first radially and axially

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extending interlocking surface oriented at an incline relative to an axis of the support

ring; and

the mounting ring having a lower surface and a plurality of circumferentially

spaced protrusions axially extending therefrom, each having a radially and axially

extending second interlocking surface oriented at an incline relative to an axis of the

mounting ring;

wherein the lower surface of the mounting ring is directly adjacent and flush

with the top surfaces of the flange segments and said first and second interlocking

surfaces when interlocked and placed adjacent each other define an anti-rotation and

hold-down coupling restraining the support and mounting rings against relative

rotation about their axes and axially separating from each other, the support and

mounting rings forming the coupling upon rotation of the mounting ring relative to

the support ring in only one direction;

wherein the flange segments each define a lower radial surface, and the

protrusions define a lower radial surface such that the flange segment lower radial

surfaces are generally aligned with the protrusion lower radial surfaces when the

support ring is coupled with the mounting ring.

14 (Previously Presented): The cutting head assembly according to claim 1,

wherein the flange segments each define a lower radial surface generally parallel to

the lower surface of the ring portion of the support ring, and the protrusions define a

lower radial surface such that the flange segment lower radial surfaces are generally

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aligned with the protrusion lower radial surfaces when the mounting ring is engaged

with the support ring.

15 (Previously Presented): The cutting head assembly according to claim 1,

wherein the support ring further comprises a hub and a plurality of spokes connecting

the hub to the ring portion, the hub being offset relative to the ring portion along the

support ring axis.

16 (Canceled).

17 (Canceled).